



Majority Caucus  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Jim Nussle, *Chairman*

## COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

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### TALKING POINTS

## Yes, America is Better Off Today

*Today – in 2004 – we are better off than we were at the end of 2000.*

- **Homeland Security:** Since 2000, we've greatly strengthened our homeland security. Today, America is better prepared to prevent, disrupt, and respond to terrorist attacks than ever before.
  - ▶ We've more than *doubled* funding for Homeland Security since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
  - ▶ We created the Department of Homeland Security.
  - ▶ With the improved resources, we've increased presence at key foreign ports, improved visa and inspection processes, strengthened seaport security, and improved security technology at airports and border crossings.
  - ▶ The BioWatch program now protects many large U.S. cities by monitoring the air for biological agents that could be released by terrorists. Additionally, Project BioShield is developing and acquiring more advanced vaccines and treatments for biological agents.
  - ▶ Over 500,000 first responders have been trained in weapons of mass destruction awareness and response since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- **Defense:** Over the past three years, we've made great strides in correcting the defense deficit begun in the early 1990s, and continuing, including:
  - ▶ Increasing the Department of Defense annual budget by over \$110 billion to prosecute the global war on terrorism and carry out military transformation.
  - ▶ Greatly improving military quality of life issues: we've increased basic pay alone by 21 percent. Out of pocket housing expenses for the troops will reduce to zero in 2005.
- **International Terrorists on Defense – Not Offense:** In 2000, the Taliban and Saddam were free to aid international terrorism through their despotic regimes.
  - ▶ Today, the Taliban no longer rule Afghanistan, and Saddam Hussein no longer rules Iraq. These former sources of international terrorism are under Coalition control.
  - ▶ Even Libya – a long-time supporter of terrorism – recently renounced aid to terrorism. Libya is now working in partnership with the United States and United Kingdom to implement a commitment to eliminate all of its ballistic missiles and chemical and nuclear development programs.

- ***Economy:*** The economy is growing strongly now in 2004 - the best in 20 years - not on the verge of a recession as in 2000.
- ▶ *Real GDP growth* is at its highest pace in 20 years; in contrast, over the last 6 months of 2000, real GDP grew at an annual rate of less than 1 percent and even declined 0.5 percent in the third quarter of 2000.
  - ▶ *Payroll employment* is growing strongly now - up over 1.1 million jobs over the past 8 months, and up by 867,000 over the first 4 months of this year. Over the last 4 months of the Clinton Administration, payroll jobs growth was slowing as the economy was entering recession, up only 284 thousand jobs.
  - ▶ *Manufacturing jobs* are increasing now - up 37,000 over the past 3 months. Over the last 3 months of the Clinton Administration, manufacturing payroll employment *fell* by 120,000 jobs.
  - ▶ *The unemployment rate* is falling now - down 0.7 percentage point from June of last year to April of this year. In contrast, 4 years ago, from January 2000 to January 2001, the unemployment rate rose by 0.3 percentage points as the economy was on the verge of recession.
  - ▶ *Housing markets* are the strongest in 20 years - and housing values are at record highs.
  - ▶ *Unemployment insurance claims* are falling, recently down to as low as 318,000; 4 years ago, in the last week of 2000, unemployment insurance claims were up to 350,000 and rising toward 400,000 as the economy entered recession.